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# TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE....

A Column on Consumer Issues  
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Consumer Protection and Antitrust Division

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April 2, 2003

## AVOID BUSINESS SUPPLIES SCAMS

Assuming a telephone call is from the manufacturer's representative for office supplies can cost your business money. This is an old yet active scam that continues to find new victims.

The scam usually works through telephone calls, the "supplier" will contact your business to gain information about the make and model of your copier or other office equipment. The caller sometimes gains the information by dropping the name of the owner, board chairman, or other employees of your business. Because the information seems so routine, it many times is given out without much thought by the person answering the call, and the call is soon forgotten.

The caller uses high pressure tactics to rush your purchase decision and dodge questions about price, quantity and brand names. The seller may falsely claim that prices are going up soon, someone was forced out of business, a warehouse is overstocked, or a limited inventory of government surplus is available. Or that a computer glitch delayed notification of a price increase, but, as a courtesy, an order has been reserved for you at the "regular" or "old" price.

To make sure you don't get ripped off, make sure you and your employees follow these simple rules:

1. If you cannot identify the caller as legitimate, do not give out any pertinent data about your office equipment and do not give your name.
2. Share all information about the caller with others in your office.
3. Designate one person who will address all inquiries about office supplies and equipment.
4. Do not accept any deliveries from a courier unless you know it is something your office has ordered.
5. If you don't recognize the name of the "supplier," don't pay the invoice without further checking.

This scam has been going on for years and results in businesses receiving high-priced, low quality copy machine supplies. Make sure all your employees are familiar with this scam and proper procedures are in place for ordering and confirming copier supplies.

*The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates allegations of fraud in the marketplace. Investigators also mediate individual complaints against businesses. If you have a consumer problem or question, call the Consumer Protection Division at 328-3404, toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or 1-800-366-6888 (w/TTY). This article and other consumer information is located on our website at [www.ag.state.nd.us](http://www.ag.state.nd.us).*

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